

SATURDAY, DEC. 7, 1872.

Subject: Motives of Action.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



New-York:

J. B. FORD & CO., No. 27 PARK PLACE.

1872.

AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY, AGENTS FOR THE TRADE.

European Agents, SAMPSON LOW, SON, & MARSTON, Crown Buildings, 188 Fleet Street, London.

Sold by all Carriers and News Dealers.

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Brooklyn, January, 1869.

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MOTIVES OF ACTION.

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."—1 Cor. x., 31.

Paul lived in a time of grand transition. On the one side, from the religious system of the Jews, which was fairly armored in ceremonies, and scaled all over with ordinances, a transition was to be made toward some degree of personal liberty. It was a problem in psychology, how a man could become religious by the legitimate use of his reason, his moral sentiments and his God-given nature.

In escaping out of that system into the largeness, the automatic condition of the Christian ideal, there were a thousand strings that had to be untied—a thousand links that had to be sundered. And you all know that men's consciences are sensitive in proportion to the definiteness of the thing on which they have centered. So that, if a man has been brought up from his youth to feel that it is a conscientious duty to cross himself, to discontinue so simple and so understandable a thing on which the conscience has rested, will be a grief to his conscience a hundred times more perceived and felt than it would be to neglect a great principle. We are familiar with the fact every day, that men feel very little conscientiousness in the violation of a great principle which is invisible, but feel excessive conscientiousness in the neglect of an act which is visible. That is, conscience acts with the senses far more powerfully than with the reason and the moral, internal judgment.

On the other side, Christianity stood as a vital force, winning to itself those who had been idolatrously brought up, and had lived in the indulgence both of superstition and the various passions and appetites which belonged to heathen worship. In the particular instance before us (without neglecting, doubtless, the Jews—for they constituted a portion of every church that was gathered, and often the chief portion), the apostle specially argued with the gentile converts, answering such questions as these: "How shall

we act when we have been invited to a feast, where, according to the heathen custom, meat has been blessed, and where the cup has been poured out as a libation to the gods? Shall we touch these things? And again, when we go to buy meat in the market; where heathen butchers have, according to their custom, marked their meat, or where it bears the priestly mark, and has been consecrated, in that way, to some heathen god, which is nothing but an idol, shall we dare to take the meat which is thus marked (and it is all marked) and to eat it?"

What does Paul say in reference to this matter? Well, he gives a great many special directions about it. He says, for instance, "In so far as you are concerned, if you want a steak, go to the market, if nobody knows anything about it, and get it, and take it home, and eat it, and ask no questions about it, and give yourself no anxiety on the subject," But if you are invited out to dine, and the host offers you meat, and says, 'This meat is dedicated to Jupiter,' and you know that if you eat it you will be understood as worshipping Jupiter, do not touch it; because you are put in a position where your eating it will be taken as an act of worship. All things are lawful, but all things are not expedient. There is no harm in the thing itself of eating meat, whether it comes from the temple or from the shambles. It may have the mark of the god, or it may be without the mark of the god—that is nothing. But you must consider when and where you eat it. Consider not only your own conscience, but other people's consciences; and do the thing which is pleasurable and kind."

Finally, he sums up the whole matter in this way:

"Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

In other words, do not bewilder yourself with endless discussions in respect to duty, in regard to this act, or that act, or the other act. Do not minify your life, or fritter away your power, by incessantly going into an argument about ordinances, as to whether you may or may not go in this or that direction. Take a grand aim; let that aim be the honor and glory of God; and then go forward. Whatever you do, no matter whether you are dealing with heathenism or Judaism, or kings, or law, or anything else, take an aim higher than these things, or than the various casuistries which are raised in connection with them. Strive for the honor and glory of God, and then push ahead. That is the way in which the text lies bedded in the context.

Take notice, then, that this passage was not designed to bind the conscience, but to loose it. It was not designed to narrow the

sphere of man in moral influence, but to augment and enlarge that sphere. It was a prescription of the apostle, not to make men more exceedingly anxious, but to relieve them of anxiety, and give them a much more liberal view of life and duty. He opens the way to the release of men from a thousand ties and obligations which had a superstitious origin, and sets their conscience on a plane of liberty, delivering them from the casuistry of ordinances or old customs.

When, therefore, you come to this passage, you must come to it in the spirit in which it was uttered. It was applied to the affairs of life more minutely than anything that had gone before; and men were led to think, at every step, "Now, whether I eat or whether I drink, or whatever I do, I must do all to the glory of God." Acting in accordance with an extreme interpretation of this injunction, a man says, "I think I will go out and get a bucket of water;—but stop! Am I going out to get that bucket of water for the glory of God?" He stops and thinks whether he is fulfilling the divine command in this act. A man says, "I believe I will go and get me a new suit of clothes;—but am I really moved, in going to get that suit of clothes, by a desire to glorify God?" A farmer says, "Next week we will gather in all the apples from our orchard"; and then he hesitates, and wonders whether it is his purpose to do it to the glory of God. He does not exactly see the connection between the two things, but he hopes that, somehow, such a connection exists.

So men interpret that passage which was meant for liberty, which was meant for release; which was meant to take a man out from the sphere of a morbid conscience and casuistical questionings, and give him a large and grand object to keep in view—men interpret that passage, sometimes, in such a way as to swamp themselves in an endless examination into their motives. And they say, whenever they do anything, "Am I acting right? Am I impelled by this or that consideration?" The spirit of this passage is, first, toward liberty of conscience, and not toward the bondage of conscience.

It proposes, secondly, for men, a general direction, supposed to be always within the reach of every man—namely, In the transfer of your life from Judaism to Christianity, or from heathenism to Christianity, or from selfishness to godliness, do not meddle with these minor and special difficulties; but set before yourselves this grand end—the honor and glory of God. Keep that steadily in view. Settle all questions of duty in such a way as you think will best please Him. That will release

you, generically, from the consideration of anything special. Rather than distress and perplex yourselves with certain questions which are continually arising, and which cannot be settled by discussion, aim at that grand center, God's glory, and go forward with that as your guiding light.

The having, as an object of our endeavor, God's glory, can be nothing other than an attempt to please God, and to obey his laws, so far as they have been made known to us. We cannot make God glorious, we cannot add anything to the divine glory, in any way but by unfolding to men the beauty and grandeur of his character. Ordinarily, in Scripture, gloryfying God signifies pleasing him by obedience to his known wishes. No other glory than this is possible to us.

In Matthew, the subject of perfection is spoken of, and God is described as a Being that is perfect in regard to benevolence; and the command is, "Be ye perfect in that way." He is described as "One who makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust, alike. He is represented as bestowing upon all men universal bounty and kindness. We are given to understand that such is God's idea of perfection; and we are commanded to be perfect in that direction.

Now, so far as we are concerned, we can only promote God's glory by complying with his wishes—by obeying his commands. To know his will is simply to know the laws which are prescribed for us.

A king is made glorious by the obedience of the subjects throughout his realm. He is honored in that way. The parent is honored by the child. How? Not by his running around the neighborhood, and saying, "Oh, what a great man my father is!" or "What a beautiful woman my mother is!" or "What a splendid house my father has to live in!" For a child to do that would be ridiculous. We like to see a child manifest warmth and affection toward his parents; but publishing such things in the streets about one's parents is not glorifying those parents. If a child loves and honors his parents, he shows it by studiously fulfilling their known wishes. An affectionate and loving child does honor his parents in the eyes of all the neighborhood. The teacher is honored, not by what the pupil says, but by what he does. Find out what they want who are put over you, and do that; and then you honor them. And we honor, or, what is the same thing, we glorify, God by fulfilling his known commands.

We may illustrate the general spirit of our text by such instruction as our government is accustomed to give to its ministers

abroad. Thus, it will send a minister to the Court of St. James with special directions on certain points; and say to him, in regard to his other duties, "Do that which will, in your judgment, be most conducive to the honor and interest of the nation that you represent," leaving much in that general way to his discretion. It will send another to the Court in Paris, and say, "Make a treaty that shall include such and such special advantages to commerce: so far as all the other questions which may come up are concerned, we cannot instruct you. Do that which you think will be for the best interest of the United States." Many things are left to his wisdom.

The command of the Bible, in such a passage as this, is, Amid all the thousand questions of life, ask yourself, What is the will of my God? What are his laws? What are the divine rules by which I am to be governed? Ascertain what these are, and then settle your casuistry by aiming to fulfill them.

The question, then, for every man to ask himself, is this: "What are my duties? What are the laws which God has laced me in with on every side"? And having answered these questions, he should say: "Let me aim at obedience to these laws: so I shall fulfill my duty, and honor my God." But it is not required that one should think of him in every act. It is not required that one should be conscious that the motive in each particular case is to please God—as we shall see in the sequel.

This leads to the supreme question of motives. Ordinarily, men regard a motive as the inducement by which any act or course of action is procured. It is supposed to be that which draws out of a man a line of conduct. But this is a wrong notion. Motives are not external. Actions are. That which stirs up in a faculty a desire for anything, however, may be objective. For instance, we say that gold is the motive which impels the miser. No; gold certainly is that which has the effect of waking up avarice in the miser, but his will is working in him the desire of acquisition; and the motive power is the faculty, and not the thing which set the faculty in motion.

The food which is presented to us addresses itself to the sense of hunger. We say that a man works because he wants food. In one sense, and in a general sense, that is true; but, after all, the truth is, that hunger, or a given craving of a man's body, is the thing which moves him toward the food. Food may suggest it, and supply it; but the power is in the man himself, and it is hunger.

So objects presented to a man's sense of praise may stir up a

desire for praise; but it is that desire for praise, or love of praise, original, creative, fundamental, universal, which is the motive of his actions. The question, therefore, becomes, not this, What end induces such a course of action? but simply this, What faculties worked in such a course of action? Thus you get back to the philosophic ground: Which were the faculties that worked? And *then* you can ask, What was it that started those faculties? But, ordinarily speaking, men confound things, and think that the external objective was the motive; whereas the living power is something in the organization of the man himself.

The doctrine of the action of the faculties is so intimately connected with the whole scheme of Christian casuistry that it will be wise for me to speak a word of instruction on that subject.

First, every faculty in its own sphere is right; and right and wrong, so far as any faculty is concerned, consist not in its action, but in the degree of its activity, and in the end or purpose for which it acts. A man slays a fellow man. Slaying is not wicked in and of itself; for, in the course of time, the man that slew will himself be slain. Justice will finally overtake the criminal even here—if he lives long enough! In one case the act is murder. In the other case it is execution. I take from a store an object of great value, and carry it home. Another man takes it and carries it home. In both cases the action is precisely the same; but there is a special reason why that man is a thief, and I am not. The reason does not lie in the action, but in something outside of it.

All through the whole economy of life you can reckon one thing as a truism—that God has never put a faculty into the mind of a man which is not, in its own sphere and degree, right. If it be wrong, it is because it is acting out of the proper degree, and out of its own sphere.

All the faculties of the mind, then, are useful. They are so many implements which we have a right to use. They were given to us for benign purposes. The whole human soul is an organization for wisdom; and you cannot take out of a man any single part, and leave the rest good. In other words, as you cannot take the smallest wheel, or any pivot or screw out of a watch, and have it a perfect watch, so you cannot take out of a man any faculty, and have him a perfect man as God meant that he should be. Every part of a man is useful; only it is to be used right, and in right conditions.

Many faculties act, I remark secondly, in regard to the other faculties, with co-operation, or with a normal alternation.

Many men say, "What was the motive by which I was guided or directed"? And when they look into their minds there is a perfect jumble of motives, as they interpret them. A man says, "I am afraid I was not actuated by right motives; for I can discern the traces of other motives."

Now, I remark, that the normal activity of the mind, in every case, is the result, not of a single faculty, but of all the faculties. The almost inevitable, and the almost universal action of the mind, is produced by masses of faculties; by faculties in groups; by bands of faculties. There is hardly any action that belongs to a man's life which is a single one—which is not complex. Almost all the faculties act in platoons, with leaders and subordinates.

A man says, "I do not think I was right, because I see there was pride in my motive." Very likely there was; but that may not invalidate your action. He says, "I may have had some personal interest that actuated me in the course which I pursued." Very likely you had; but that may not invalidate your intent either. The motives from which a man acts operate in groups.

Men's thoughts and feelings and fancies flow together. The mind is a subtle thing. The analysis of it is difficult. The revolution of forces which go to make up the process of your thought in a single hour is a more stupendous work than any that was ever performed in a laboratory. There are no substances in life which are comparable for wonderful subtleness, for volume and importance, with the activities of this cerebral mass. Marvelous beyond all conception is the mind, that, every single hour, sees such permutations; such combinations; such changes, so rapidly effected; such alternations of parts; such interlacings; such flashing and subsidence of fancies; such risings and fallings of hope; such comings and goings of fear; such experiences of pleasure and pain; such glancings hither and thither of thoughts and feelings; such endless complications of forces! If it were possible for a man to put sensitized paper in his hat, and have everything that he thought or felt stamp itself thereon, the journal of an hour thus recorded it would take him two days to read, there would be so much of it. And how strange would be the unfolding of the activities of this wonderful agent! How beyond all comprehension are the hidden processes which work in such combinations and in such directions, coming and going; uniting together and separating again; forming new scenes momentarily, like the light which at night twinkles and crinkles and dances on the undulating surface of the water! How indescribably marvelous are the versatility, the fruitfulness and the complications of the human soul! And

yet, men are troubled because there is not a singleness of motive which inspires their action !

A man says, "I am afraid I do not do all that I do from that single motive, a desire to honor and glorify God. I think I have detected something else!" Oh, you have detected something else, have you? You are like an owl that creeps out of the tree about 10 o'clock in the morning and hoots, and says, "I think I see the sun's light somewhere." One would suppose that it might be light at that time—to anything but an owl!

Thirdly, the power of any action in men depends, not on the singleness, philosophically speaking, of any faculty, but on a combination of faculties. I have spoken of the fact of the endless combinations that take place in all actions. Now, I say that the very value of activity results from these combinations. Instead of other faculties invalidating any course of conduct, or making it inferior, its strength and richness and value depend upon the other faculties which are concentrated in the production of it. To be sure, it is said, "When thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light;" but men do not interpret that passage right. They apply it to a single faculty, as the hunter squints along his single gun-barrel at one bird; but "singleness" means sincerity, honesty, directness, truthfulness, and has nothing to do with complexity as we are speaking of it.

One of the things which make men weak in life, one of the things which prevent their acting in volume, is that they are acting in special all the time.

To take an illustration which is familiar, out of my own profession, I hold that every sermon is strong or feeble by the number of faculties which go into the making of it. In order to have "beaten wheat," as it is called, "of the sanctuary," a man winnows out all personal feeling, and says, "That does not belong to the dignity of the pulpit;" and leaves out all those things in life which are happening every day, saying, "Common matters ought to have nothing to do with the highest themes;" and rejects the whole flow of sympathetic emotions, saying, "We ought to reduce this subject to its exact elements;" and then he says, "There must be no false lights allowed to shine from it," and shuts down the slide, and cuts off imagination; and then he says, "It is going to be delivered to dying souls, on Sunday, in the house of God, and there must be no indulgence in humor," and closes all the avenues through which that element might creep in; and then he says, "It must be the cleanest truth," and excludes all the feelings and leaves nothing but bare intellection; and that intellection he reduces to

an abstraction; and when he has curtailed and limited it till it consists of one solitary beam of light, he preaches it, standing still, not letting himself out, softly; and that poor, starved, meagre line of abstract intellection he calls "a sermon!"

I should as soon invite my friends to my house to take a meal of fruit, and reduce the fruit to its chemical elements, throwing away the beautiful color, throwing away the tempting skin, throwing away the pulp, drying out the juice, reducing the whole to its last constituents, and give them a cup of that, and say, "Here is the very chemical quintessence of the peach!" They would taste it, and say with wry face, "Well, I don't like peaches!"

With many a man it is the study of his week of preparation how to make a poor sermon, by getting himself, and all that can make it attractive or inspiring, *out*; as if the business of the preacher was anything but to take God's truth, and give it the form of his personality, and add to it all the power which comes from the sympathetic feelings!

Now, if, in preaching, a man has an opportunity to use humor or wit, or imagination, let him use it. If he has an opportunity to use causal reason, let him use that. If he has an opportunity to use perceptive reason, let him use that. If he has the power to reason logically or analytically, let him use that. Let him preach in the way that seems most natural to him. And if there come up social feelings, and sympathetic feelings, or any other feelings which tend to draw him nearer to his hearers, and them nearer to him, let them have free scope, instead of winnowing them out so that there shall be nothing left but artificial, periphrastic, literary language which Johnson or Addison might have understood, but which common folks do not understand. After men have laid aside all that language which is used in familiar conversation at the table or by the fireside, and drained their words as far as possible of blood, and dessicated their thoughts most effectually, they give them to their congregations, as the "beaten wheat of the sanctuary."

Now, I say that the more faculties there are working in a man, the better. Let anger work in its place; indignation in its place; fear in its place; hope in its place; love in its place; sympathy in its place; repulsion in its place; imagination in its place; all those elements which give force and kindness to the mind in their places. The highest condition of the mind is that in which all the pipes in this multiform organ are uttering their appropriate sounds in the proper way. Every man is making the best use of himself when the multiplicity of faculties with which he has been endowed are acting normally and rightly in any direction.

So that, when men analyze their motives, and undertake to reduce to single motives the whole play of the mind, with all its multitudinous elements, the process is irreligious. God has been many thousands of years in making men, and many men spend most of their time in spitting on what God had made; as if the thing that is divine and normal, and is a constituent element of the mind, could, with impunity, on any plea, be derided, or despised, or cast out, or lightly esteemed!

Fourthly, moral character is to be determined by primary and regnant motives, and not simply by auxiliary ones.

This leads me to say that on the examination of one's self it will almost invariably be found that there is a prime motive, or a prime faculty, which acts, and gives direction to the action, and that the other faculties which act in combination with it are simply auxiliary, and hold it on. During the time of deliberation one feeling may be strong, and may point out a given course, and others may quarrel with it till the thing is settled; but when the purpose is once formed, and the man begins to act, there is a primary faculty, or group of faculties, which shapes or marks out the main purpose, and all the other faculties come in as auxiliary, and help on that main purpose.

For instance, a man says, "I am determined that next year I will give twenty thousand dollars to the endowment of a school in my native village." Having settled the pro's and cons, he begins to act in that direction. He goes to work to set apart the twenty-thousand dollars which he has made up his mind to give. But while he is doing it, Selfishness tries to beat him down, and says, "Do not give quite so much: fifteen thousand is enough to give." But the man says, "No, I will give twenty thousand." Then Caution comes in, and says, "How do you know but you are taking bread out of your children's mouths! Had you not better, while you are living, invest your money so that they will have the benefit of it after you are gone?" "No," he says, "I am going to give twenty thousand dollars; that is settled: now hold your peace down there!" And they do hold their peace.

He is a very conscientious man; and after the thing is done he begins to think about how he came to do it; and he says to himself: "What motives did I act from?" He has been reading this chapter in the Bible, and he says, "Did I think of God's glory when I determined to do it? I do not remember that I did? Do not I know that I take a great deal of pleasure in the thought that my neighbors know that I did it, and are praising me? Is there not in my feeling an element of self-praise? I am afraid there is. Do I

not know that this act will give me a great deal of credit in the street, and that men will rather look up to me, and that it will be a help to me in various ways? I think I do. I am sure I see traces of selfishness and self-seeking in the course which I have taken." And so the man torments himself in every way. Pride says to him, "I can point out to you that I had some share in that deed;" and Hope says, "That is not all glorifying God: there is hope of reward in it;" and the different auxiliary faculties say, "I have a part in that." And so they have. Everything that is in you ought to have a share in it. There is not a great and worthy act which a man resolves to do from the noblest side, and highest part of his nature, that everything, from top to bottom of his head, or from center to circumference of his being, ought not to say, "Hallelujah!" Every feeling—benevolence, hope, fear, love, sympathy, pride, acquisitiveness—ought to worship a good act, a right intention; and the mere fact that you have these corroborating feelings, so far from invalidating your conduct, proves that your mind is acting normally, and in power, as God meant that it should act.

I illustrate this to show that in normal actions it is generally a faculty, or a group of faculties, that moves first; and that if the mind be free and right the rest of the faculties co-ordinate with the primary ones, and help them on, giving power, variety and strength to what they do. So that the mere presence of collateral feelings, or incidental motives, does not invalidate the primary ones, but corroborates them, and makes them better.

Thus, a man says to himself, I have made up my mind to join the church; but I do not know as I am fit to do it. I do not know as I am sincere in wishing to do it." What is the matter? "Well, I know that nothing in the world would please my wife so much as my joining the church; and I have thought, perhaps it was to please her that I was going to join it. Besides, I know that when my mother hears that I have joined the church nothing outside the trumpet of heaven would please her so much. I am afraid that it may be my desire to please them that has led me to take this step." Well, it is right that you should inquire and see whether these are the prime feelings; but if you say, "I have taken a look over life, and I perceive that I am passing through my years, and I see that the time is going fast with me, and that if ever I am to change and get a hold on heaven I must do it soon, and I had better begin now, and I am determined to obey my Master according to the best of my ability," there is a noble motive and that should be the sovereign motive; and if then, when that is settled, you think that your

wife and your mother will be rejoiced, and that everybody who loves you will be made happy, this collateral motive will be a help to the other. And if there comes in the reflection, afterwards, "I have been a poor shack, out of pocket; and if I join the church very likely I shall do a better business," that will do no harm. Take courage from that thought. You ought to do a better business when you become a better man. If the only motive, or the strongest one were that of the till, it would be a different thing; but if your conversion was genuine, and your desire and determination to live a Christian life is the primary one, then these social motives and considerations of profit will be an advantage to you rather than a hindrance. Thoughts of personal interest are not wrong under such circumstances. Godliness is profitable for this world and for that which is to come; only see that your *chief* motive is to glorify God. When you come to explore your mind, make sure that your purpose is right in this respect, and then do not be afraid of other feelings, whether they act singly or in groups, clear down to the bottom. You have a right to the whole of yourself. You have a right to help yourself by all of your faculties.

Having given this idea of motive as being a faculty, or a group of faculties; and having considered the relative excellence of motives, as high or low, and as primary and auxiliary, I am prepared, by a few words of application, I hope, to throw light upon some questions which have arisen in the minds of many persons who have not taken the comfort in their religious life which they might if they had been better informed as to their duty.

On the one side, let me say, is the danger of carelessness, and of indifference to all motives. This can scarcely be too much reprobated. Men ought to want to do the best things from the best motives. That is, men ought to want to do the best things with their noblest faculties. It is better to do a right thing from the poorest motive than not at all.

There has been a fire in Boston by which thousands of people have been thrown out of work. A shrewd man says, "Now I am going to send ten thousand dollars to the fund for the relief of those unfortunate people. I have been waiting for an opportunity to get my name before the public, and after so long a time this one has presented itself; and I am going to improve it. Won't the sending that money be a good advertisement for me? I will make more than that in one year out of my business." There is calculation here which the man makes with his avarice; and you expect me to say it is mean. Well, there is another man who has made calculation with his avarice. He says, "I won't send a penny."

Which is the meaner? I say that it is a very poor and low way of acting for a man to do a great generosity from a great selfishness; but it is better to do a generous thing from selfishness than not to do it all. It is not good, it is not praiseworthy; but it certainly is far better than to leave the thing undone.

Another man says within himself, "Everybody in society is going to give money for this object, and I am expected by my friends to stand up with them; I think it is right in times of personal trouble for men to stand by each other, and I will give my proportion." His motive is a little higher than that of the other man, but it is not very high. He acts from a sense of responsibility. He has a certain sympathy with the ideas of the circle in which he moves, and that is about all. The act in him is not noble; but it is far better that he should relieve the sufferings of his fellow men with his ten thousand dollars from the mere feeling of pride of character, than that he should not do it all.

Another man says, "I know there are a great many suffering from the effects of that fire, and I cannot help feeling for them; I do not feel justified in withholding my assistance from them; I am going to give them ten thousand dollars."

Now we begin to come to the real man. Now we begin to hear the ring of the divine nature in man. It is compassion that he feels.

But there is something higher than that. A man has just got together ten thousand dollars with which he was going to build a house for his daughter—his only beloved child—whose marriage is approaching. This object is dear to his thought. But something from within whispers to him, and says, "Those poor creatures are in great need, and you ought to help them." "But," he says, "if I do this, I must take it right out of my own kindred; and I will, God help me! They can wait, but these sufferers cannot."

That is noble; and yet there is something still better—the noblest of all. I will give you a case that I think surpasses that.

The Committee that meets at the Park Street Church, in Boston, sit every day, and hear applications from the poor who have been thrown out of work. There was one establishment in which were employed some nine hundred sewing girls. The lady superintendent who had charge of them all came every day to the rooms, and stood there to authenticate their various cases, to identify them, and to see that they had help. Day after day, day after day, day after day she was at her post, till one day, after nearly a week had passed, the thought occurred to one of the ladies to say to her, "You have been serving everybody else: possibly you may need

some help." It was ascertained that she had given the little that she had, and all her time; that she had sent her limited store to others, and kept none for herself; that she had fed everybody's mouth but her own; that she had seen that all had their rents paid but herself; and that she was on the verge of starving. Here she stood, on the very edge of misery, ministering, all the time, with all her power, to others. This is a case in which, if Jesus had passed by, he would have said of her, as he said of the widow who gave her two mites, "Verily she hath cast in more than all the others."

But I say that it is better for a person to do a right thing even from a low motive, than not to do it at all. Doing right is right; but doing right may be right meanly or gloriously.

On one side, therefore, we ought to be careful about our motives, and seek to act from high ones; but on the other side we ought not to be morbid and over-cautious in such a way as to take all satisfaction from human conduct. It does not take a long run of this sort of thing to deteriorate morality. If you make the condition of right living onerous, the great mass of mankind will be discouraged. It may be that you will make out of every hundred two or three heroes, yet all the rest, will be, not heroes, but the opposite.

I now and then speak of Calvinism in terms of censure. You sometimes think, as I give prominence to one side, that I disesteem the other side. You are apt to suppose, when I speak in commendation of elements in which Calvinistic theology is lacking, that I have no regard for that theology. It has many good features, and has accomplished much that is praiseworthy; and I do not condemn it altogether when I sit in judgment upon some of its elements; but I say, as I have often said, that its general effect is to build up the strong, and make them stronger, and to discourage the weak, and make them weaker. That is not the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and I call Calvinism to account on this ground. I say that any system, no matter how much good it does, which discourages the mass of mankind, cannot be right. I say that any casuistry or any teaching which perplexes men, and takes away the motive to right doing which they have, and leads them to give up the endeavor to live right, cannot but be wrong. You cannot have a right system, you cannot have a system which is in accordance with the spirit of Jesus, unless it be a system which encourages every one, from the lowest to the highest, to live better. A system to be in the highest degree effectual must be so simple that the weak can understand it. It must be such that a wayfaring man though a fool shall not err therein.

If you say to a man, "You have held up before you an ideal of Christian duty, and you must live up to that ideal; you must act from the highest motives—for if those motives are adulterated by lower ones, they go for nothing," you screw the man up till he is like a violin-string that goes squealing higher and higher, until by and by it snaps, and no longer has any power. There are thousands and thousands of men who began honestly to live a Christian life, but on whom were put tests, until they were screwed so high that the feeling in them snapped; and now they are in despair; and they say, "There is no use of my trying any longer. I must take what I can get, and let everything else go."

This kind of scrutiny of motives, with a wrong philosophy, intensely carried forward, may do for here and there a poetic nature, or philosophic nature, it may do for strong, broad men, who have inherited the consciences of ten generations; it may do for geniuses of moral sense; it may make these greater and stronger; but it will not do for children and weak people. They perish under a system which is made to feed the strong. The Gospel must feed the weak, and then go up and feed the strong.

I remark again, that there is greet feebleness, and a great want of generous momentum in the Christian life, which comes from the consciousness of one's self. My own impression is that there are two kinds of egotism—one that comes from thinking about one's self, and one that comes from forgetting one's self. Paul was a remarkable example of egotism; but when he spoke of himself, it was not "I," but "Christ that lives in me." He was so absolutely absorbed in another that he had no particular sense of his own identity.

Now, any course of self-examination is mischievous that puts a man all the time upon thinking of himself, and upon a mean, mousing, rankling thinking of himself at that. Any course of self-examination is pernicious under which a man is continually asking himself, "Am I going right now?"—under which a man says, for instance, at ten o'clock, "Well, I have gone right all day so far, but at twelve says, "Have I had the glory of God before me up to this time? Have I been acting from such and such motives?" This sort of introversion is fundamentally immoral. It is immoral morality. You are not to make for yourself a nest, and sit and brood over your possible conduct. You are to take your direction, and be sure it is right, and then make a fire, and put on steam, and go ahead, and trust yourself on the way.

I should like to know what kind of children I would have if I never let them go out of my sight, as men never do their motives,

and if I said to them, every time they stirred to go anywhere, "What are you going there for?" and insisted upon their giving account of all they did, and stopped them, and interfered with them every hour and every minute? They would be goody-good till they were about seventeen, and devil-devil after that!

Household government is to teach the child how to take care of himself; but he will not learn how to take care of himself if he is done up in brown paper, and tied with a string! If a child is to be anything, he must be trusted, and allowed to make mistakes. The world was made to make mistakes in. The place where they do not make mistakes is some way distant!

If you treat a man as a man, he will act like a man. If you treat him as a dishonest man, or a treacherous man, you will be likely to get back the feeling which you reflect upon him. So, if you are all the time suspecting that you are selfish, you will be apt to be selfish. If you are continually stopping your faculties, as you go through your round of duties, saying to them, "Show your passport," what rush can their be to your life?

Suppose John Zundel should stop to explain every chord that he played, and should say to me at every turn, "Now, hark! here comes the transition?" I should have the explanations, I should have a lecture upon music; but I should get no music.

Men, instead of letting their hearts, inspired of God, ring out that which is in them, are perpetually stopping them, and exhibiting them before themselves, and analyzing them; but there can be no momentum, none of that breadth and strength and largeness which a man should have, under such circumstances. You must trust yourself.

"But suppose I go wrong?" Well, go wrong then. It is better that you should go wrong, part of the time, trusting yourself, than that, distrusting yourself, you should go wrong all the time. You must have strength of purpose. You must have *Junge*! You must start out in the morning meaning to do right, seeing that you are right, armed for the right, and taking aim in the right direction; you must have aspiration, call on God, forget yourself, and then go forward into life; and if at noontide or at eventide, there comes a moment for reflection or meditation, do as the shipmaster does—take an observation, see how you hold on your course, get your direction again, and do the best you can all the way through.

If you have gone through a line of action, I remark once more, get as much comfort out of it as you can. God meant joy to be nutriment. Jesus meant that his disciples should have peace and

joy. They were to have sorrow, 'to be sure; but sorrow is an apple tree that gives apples which when ripe are not sour. Many afflictions are like orange trees that are full of thorns, but on which, here and there, is fruit that is filled with sweetness. We must bear and endure; and while in bearing and enduring there is suffering, there is also some enjoyment.

Do not be afraid of enjoying yourself. Avoid sordid joy, and indiscriminating peace and rest; but mean the best things, aim at them, do as well as you can under the circumstances, and then, for heaven's sake, take some comfort.

But no, the dear conscientious woman, who has got up early and sat up late, and worked to the extent of her power, goes and sits down and looks into the fireplace, and says, "I am afraid I have not acted from pure motives. I do not think I have done as I ought to;" and in five minutes she picks to pieces the work of the day. And that is her thank-offering to God! He does not thank you for any such miserable whining as that, any more than I should my children if they did the same thing. If I am satisfied that my children in the main mean right, cannot I overlook their shortcomings? Is it not a part of my life to do it?

We are not serving a hard master: we are serving a Master who is more lenient and gentle toward us than over-conscientious persons are toward themselves. You are binding on yourselves and others burdens which are too heavy to be borne. Many of you make your life such a bondage, and task, and chide yourselves so, that men get no encouragement from you in living a life of honesty, and truth, and humility, and virtue; and, when they look upon you, do not want to glorify God, but say, "I would not be such a man." You ought to live such a life of aspiration and integrity that men, seeing you, shall want to follow your example. You can then be generous with your mistakes and faults as God is generous with your sins. And men, seeing you thus giving power to life, will be stimulated to greater exertions in same direction.

Do not expect that in this mortal state you will be other than imperfect. Expect that every day you will be more or less imperfect—as certainly you will be. Live trusting the grace of God; sing, and be glad; and see to it, always, that the upper part works strongest and first, and that the bottom is kept under, as a servant. Blessed be those servants that are servants, and cursed be those servants that are masters. Let reason, the moral sentiments, all generous impulses, have play and power, and let those lower feelings that want to help follow after.

Do not be a hard master with yourself. Serve Christ; serve him cheerfully and joyfully; and he will serve you royally, with an eternal salvation.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

IF only they could come to thee, O God, who could wear a pure robe, and carry a heart without stain, who, then should draw near to thee? Thou callest the weak to come, filled with infirmity. Thou callest the sinful, who are conscious of their transgression, to thee. Thou callest unto thee those who are infirm of purpose, vacillating from day to day, and falling back from their best resolve. It is a straight and a steep way that men are called to walk. And thou knowest—for thy feet have trod it—the way of life. Thou hast been tempted in all points like as we are; and thou proclaimest thyself a merciful high-priest touched with the feeling of our infirmity; as, long before, thou hadst said, Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

We draw near to thee in thy great benignity, in thy great mercy and grace, O Lord, to uncover that which before thee is always uncovered. We draw near to say, Search us, and understand our most secret thought. Not by our wisdom, but by thine own insight and wisdom, help us, and do for us that which is best. We trust ourselves in the hand of supreme Love. We believe that in love is all needed justice. We believe that all discriminating truth, all that is necessary for the upbuilding of men in righteousness, is comprehended therein. We believe that love is the heart of God, and the treasure-house of the universe; and that out of the great realm of divine love come forth life, and all the succor that life needs, and all the inspirations of men, yea, and their chastisements. *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.*

We rejoice that we may draw near to such an One, from whom we learned how to be piteous; from whom we learned mercy; from whom, as scholars, we learned how to forgive.

O Lord, our God, we thank thee that, in the greatness of thy nature, thou dost not forget us. We are in supreme selfishness walking through life, and disdaining everything that is not of us or like us. We tread upon the worm remorselessly. We brush away the insect because it is not human. We care little for animals. Though they be sentient, and though they have their own sphere, they are little to us except to promote our happiness. We think nothing of the vast fellowship around us and beneath us, and stand solely in the sovereignty of our position.

Thou, O Lord, dost not so stand. All thy creatures are dear to thee. They are fed and sustained by thee. Though they toil not, and do not spin, yet God supplieth them. Those eternal laws by which the universe is upheld, and by which all its abundance is produced, are but the expressions of thy thought and the manifestations of thy power, all-ministering and all-sustaining. And we beseech of thee that we may feel that in the hands of such a God—a God so full of ministrations of mercy; a God whose aims are upward and toward perfection—we are safe. Grant, O God, that we may seek perfection in the same way that thou wouldst have us perfect. Grant that we may be faithful disciples of Him who maketh his sun to rise

on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust, and saith to us, Be ye in this way perfect.

And now, Lord, we pray that thy blessing may rest severally upon all who are gathered together in thy presence; upon all those who sit in darkness of soul, and are unconsolated, or unconsolable. Be their Comforter. Thou canst reach the uttermost despair. Thou canst relieve that distress on which no light of this world can be made to shine.

We commend to thee all who are bereaved; all who are watching in doubt and fear for those who are much beloved; all those hearts that are pained or overburdened in behalf of their children or friends. We draw near to thee, and, with the full fervor of love, beseech of thee for every one, in all the history and mystery of life. Nothing is concealed from thee, and thou hast infinite pity and infinite succor; and may all that are in trouble draw near to thee, and find covert beneath thy wings.

Grant thy blessing, we beseech of thee, to rest upon those who are burdened more than they can bear with trouble and care in life. Have compassion on all those who have seen their cherished expectations dashed to the ground in a moment. Remember those who yesterday were strong and hopeful, but who to-day are overthrown and in ruins. We beseech of thee to teach them to put their treasure higher than fire and water, or any earthly power, can reach. Grant, we beseech of thee, that none of them may yield to despair. May they be saved by hope, and lifted up above present trouble, and be strengthened again, to-morrow, to make battle for that which is right and good. We pray that thou wilt grant that their faith and their courage may not fail them. Grant that they may stand, not in their own strength, but in the strength of God, which shall make their strength victorious.

We pray for all those who remember friends afar off. Some are praying for their dear ones upon the sea. Be with them upon the sea, thou that didst walk upon the water, and in the storm didst guide it. Hast thou forgotten thy power upon the sea?

Remember those who are in distant lands, in the variety of their circumstances. Be gracious unto them.

Be with those who are strangers among us, and whose whole households, all of whose friends, are afar off. Wilt thou grant that to-day all that are home-sick and heart-sick may be brought so near to thee and to the power of divine love, that they shall be comforted and strengthened in the ways of life.

Look in compassion upon the outcast, and teach us more and more to look upon them in compassion. And may we not become selfish, nor arrogant, nor self-conceited, nor hard-hearted by our familiarity with sin. We pray that our hearts may still be tempered with gentleness, and sympathy, and love.

We pray, O Lord our God, that thou wilt remember the work of knowledge. May those in our midst who are engaged in instructing the young be guided of God. May they not work in the anticipation of reward; and yet, may they be rewarded as they go on day by day.

Prepare us for the end of life here, and prepare us for that other life which awaits us beyond this world. And grant unto us the hope of believing that when this life is over, we shall begin our life again in a higher sphere, under a better ministration, and with nobler joy, thou thyself being our Leader, in thine own presence, no more speaking to us afar off through signs, and symbols, and laws, but communing with us face to face, we seeing thee as thou art, and loving like unto thee.

And we will give the praise of our salvation to the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thy blessing may rest upon the word of truth spoken. May it sink into the heart as seed that falls into good ground. As seed, never so small, dropped into the soil, springs up, and brings forth flowers and fruit, so may these words, to which we have listened, come forth, and bear both flowers and fruits to the honor of thy name, and to the comfort of our own souls. O thou great Lover, thy word is filled with tokens of thy benevolence and bounty. O thou tender Father, let us not tremble as if thou wert an unfeeling tyrant. O thou comforting God, give us consolation in our sorrow. O thou most merciful Being, give us peace in our infirmities, and give us encouragement in our mistakes and failures. Thou dost pity: help us also to pity, and so to be like unto thee. And at last bring us, through experiment, and suffering, and trial, to that sphere where we shall enter upon a higher and nobler life, through riches of grace in Christ Jesus. *Amen.*

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